Editorial

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Editorial: To cook or not to cook - what are the barriers?

This special edition contains articles from key academic and practitioners on the subject of cooking and cooking skills. The subjects covered range from those dealing with distributionof skills in the population, cooking skills as part of public health interventions, through to measurement issues and the delivery of programmes in settings such as schools and communities. As well as a broad range of focus the professions involved in promoting cooking cover public health, health promotion community development, home economists, nutritionists and chefs, as well as the views of the public.

As Nelson Mandela said education '*is the most powerful weapon for changing the world*.' The teaching and learning of cooking skills falls within this category as it can be a meeting point for many agendas not simply the teaching of skills but as way of offering a window on the wider world of food and food systems (Caraher and Reynolds, 2005; Caraher and Carey, 2010 and 2011).

The order of the articles is set out around a purposeful narrative structure although as you read the articles you will see links and overlaps between the various pieces of work. Firstly we start with Begley, Gallegos and Vidgen looking at the case for the effectiveness of cooking interventions within a public health nutrition framework in Australia. Their conclusions are that more evaluation and research is required as well as need to improve the quality of cooking interventions. Then looking at the Island of Ireland and results from a survey, McCloat Mooney and Hollywood show that the barriers to cooking are not just skills based but include issues such as time, cost, family life and limited resources.

So having set the background we move to a series of articles on measurement and evaluation. This includes work from Brazil, by Proença and the team at the Federal University of Santa Catarina on the construct validity of a cooking skills and healthy eating questionnaires using the '*known groups method*'. The developed a validated cooking skills and health-eating questionnaire with an ability to detect differences between groups and therefore useful to provide data for future interventions. This is followed by work from Lohse and colleagues from the USA on the development of an instrument to measure eight to eleven year olds and their concepts of cooking. This

study addressed a gap in the literature on children's appreciation of cooking and offers face valid survey items to measure cooking experiences, skills, and attitude. This is followed by work from Fordyce-Voorham on an evaluation tool for measuring food skills acquisition for use by home economics teachers in the classroom. This was based on eighteen practical food skills identified by teachers and verified by analysis.

We then move to two studies which examine approaches to interventions, one by Condrasky and her colleagues at Clemson University on teaching cooking to undergraduate nutrition students. This is based on an approach Condrasky has pioneered called '*culinary nutrition'*. This consisted of a six-week program for undergraduate nutrition-related majors with components such as cooking with a chef, healthy shopping on a budget and store visits. The results show positive impacts from combining culinary nutrition training with food budget information for entry-level nutrition related graduates. This is followed by work from Singapore on a mixed methods approach in a primary care setting by Goh and colleagues. This combines nutrition education with cooking demonstrations and makes case for multi-methods to support learning and skills acquisition. It also demonstrates the possibilities for opportunistic approaches to delivering a programme in a primary care setting.

We then move to five grouped articles on what we have loosely called lessons from the front line. These range from work by Granberg and her colleagues from Sweden on the attitudes of home economics teachers to learning and teaching cooking to those with mild intellectual disabilities. The results identify the elements that teachers consider important and that teachers when planning lessons should also be cognisant of students' specific circumstances and context. The next paper is a study based within a 'rehabilitation' setting in England by Parsons and colleagues. The focus is on one-to-one cooking and results show that one of the key outcomes is the development of self-worth through cooking and subsequently sharing food with others. These findings overlap with a study from Nottingham in England by Orr and colleagues which is a 6 week community-based dietary intervention. The findings showed improvements in health behaviours related to cooking but also highlighted the wider impact on family and friends. Bostic and McClain in a study from the USA show how older adults cooking skills are influenced by the their life experiences and result in four trajectories '*resilient, expanding, contracting interest, and contracting capability'*. The lesson is that cooking skills and trajectories are malleable and influenced by life experiences. A study by Levine and colleagues of cookbooks in the USA shows that they have the potential to

communicating safe food handling and cooking practices but that currently cookbook authors provide inadequate advice on cooking temperatures. Yet another dimension to cooking skills given the rise of household foodborne illnesses. The final paper in this grouping is a 'realist review' of grey literature from Scotland by Blamey and collaborators. They searched for intervention strategies and programme theories underpinning cooking interventions. This paper highlights the expectations of both those commissioning cooking interventions and the fact that there were limitations in course design, reporting and self-evaluation. They address this with a set of recommendations to improve interventions, commissioning, design and evaluation of cooking projects.

We bookend the special edition with the final paper by Wolfson and her fellow academics. This paper expands the way in which we see and view cooking skills. They develop the concept of '*food agency'* and contrast this with common perceptions found in the food and nutrition literature. They make a plea for an understanding of cooking within the context of daily food practices and varied life contexts. A feature to be found inn many of the paper in this special edition and a fitting way to end the special edition.

So what becomes apparent from all the above is that teaching and learning cooking offers an opportunity to use food as a source of education and liberation. The importance of food in the diet is clear, the role of food as a cultural artefact is less clearly dealt with in the literature and yet we know that food is a public good and as such can be a flashpoint for protest –both public and private (Caraher, 2003). Thompson (1993) called this the underlying moral economy of food. Freire (1970) talked of an education system that involves participation, and action to promote conscious empowerment. The interesting element about cooking is that as Lévi-Strauss (2008) pointed out it involves the transformation of food and this is not just a physical change as in the application of heat or cold but also a cultural change as in the appearance of the food. Cooking and food preparation offer such an opportunity to address both changes in educational practice and the moral economy. For example, Linderg et al (2016) show how the home economics curriculum and specifically the food and cooking element within it, can be used to teach issues about human rights. Also cooking education can be about food systems and who makes decisions about our food- helping develop a food literate population (Caraher and Carey 2010 and 2011). This would have the additional advantage of bringing people '*far more into food policy'* (Centre for Food Policy, 2016, p 25).

A key point that strikes us reading these papers are not the differences but the overlaps and similarities. A key emerging issues appears to be the social context of cooking alongside the acquisition of knowledge and skills. While the contribution of cooking to improved nutrition and public health obviously remains important, it would be a shame if that becomes the sole focus. There are many reasons for supporting food education and cooking such as cultural aspects and empowerment. We are confident that the papers in this special edition will contribute to furthering the practice, debates, knowledge and academic research related to cooking. We wish to thank all who contributed to this special edition, we very much enjoyed reading the work and hearing of all the exciting and innovative work being carried out.

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Article Order

1. *Effectiveness of Australian cooking skill interventions Begley*
2. *Have Irish parents put cooking on the back burner? An Island of Ireland study of the food skills, cooking confidence and practices of parents McCloat,*
3. Construct validity of Brazilian Cooking Skills and Healthy Eating Questionnaire by the known-groups method Proença,
4. School-Age Cooking Program Assessment Has Face Valid Lohse,
5. An evaluation tool for measuring food skills acquisition Fordyce-Voorham,
6. Effectiveness of nutrition education accompanied by cooking demonstration Goh, Lynette
7. Culinary Nutrition Education for Undergraduate Nutrition Dietetics Students Condrasky
8. Effectiveness of nutrition education accompanied by cooking demonstration Goh, Lynette
9. Teaching and learning cooking skills in Home Economics What do teachers for students with mild intellectual disabilities consider important to learn? Granberg,
10. Cooking with offenders to improve health and wellbeing. Parsons,

11. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Eatwell for Life programme in Nottingham Orr,
12. Older Adults' Cooking Trajectories: Shifting Skills and Strategies Bostic,
13. Evaluating food safety risk message in popular cookbooks Levine
14. Strengthening adult community-based cooking skills interventions using realist principles- Blamey, Avril
15. *A comprehensive approach to understanding cooking behavior: implications for research and practice Wolfson*